Annual Operating Plan 2014/15

Alberta Conservation Association

Conserving Alberta's Wild Side

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ab-conservation.com

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Our Vision

An Alberta with an abundance and diversity of wildlife, fish and their habitats; where future generations continue to use, enjoy and value our rich outdoor heritage.

Our Mission

ACA conserves, protects and enhances fish and wildlife populations and their habitats for Albertans to enjoy, value and use.

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Cover:
Emily Court

Copies of this plan are available on our website at:
ab-conservation.com/aop

1.0
Introduction

Alberta Conservation Association's (ACA) *2014/15 Annual Operating Plan* informs Albertans, our stakeholders and partners about the projects we are undertaking this fiscal year and how we are directing revenue to our various program areas. The plan guides us in fulfilling our mission to conserve, protect and enhance fish and wildlife populations and their habitats for all Albertans to enjoy, value and use. It also assists us with meeting our delegated responsibilities, through the *Wildlife Act*, to the Minister of Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development (ESRD).

When reviewing this document, you may notice a discrepancy between the numbers in the program budget and those stated in the Financial Summary (Section 8). This difference is attributed to how costs for activities such as training, planning, professional development and public speaking are budgeted. The budget is typically allocated within the program area and not within a specific project.

For 2014/15, as a result of our Program Agreements with ESRD, the Report A Poacher and Compensation program was separated into two programs (see below), and the Communications program has been renamed. We report on budgets within 12 program areas: 1) Finance and Administration, 2) Business Development, 3) Human Resources, 4) Health and Safety, 5) Information Technology, 6) Information, Education and Communications, 7) Wildlife, 8) Fisheries, 9) Land Management, 10) Report A Poacher, 11) Landowner Compensation and Damage Prevention Program, and 12) Grants.

In 2014/15, we anticipate receiving in excess of $6 million in partner funds (non-levy) and/or in land value. This allows us to direct more than the entire projected levy revenue value from hunting and fishing licences ($11,448,564) towards conservation efforts. This achievement speaks to the quality of our conservation work, the efforts of our dedicated employees and the generosity of our various donors and partners.

Together with our member groups and the provincial government (ESRD), we remain committed to retaining, recruiting and educating hunters, anglers and trappers. Historically, this collective group has been the driving force behind conservation initiatives in Alberta, and its members continue to contribute their time, effort and money (through levies on licences) into conserving Alberta's natural heritage. Considering the role they play in conservation, it is crucial that we continue to support retention, recruitment and education activities.

In 2014/15, the Hunter, Angler and Trapper Retention, Recruitment and Education Grants have been combined with the former Grant Eligible Conservation Fund – Part A to create the ACA Conservation, Community and Education Grants. In addition, the

former Grant Eligible Conservation Fund – Part B has been renamed ACA Research Grants. These changes have been implemented to simplify and streamline our granting process.

In our partnership with Hunting for Tomorrow, we will continue to reimburse the cost of the first WIN card for any youth who successfully completes the Conservation and Hunter Education Training Program. Along with receiving a reimbursement of $8.40 (cost of the WIN card), each youth receives an information package containing literature on each of our member groups, giving them an opportunity to learn more about Alberta's conservation community.

A significant part of our work involves developing and maintaining partnerships. These partnerships contribute to the success and scope of our conservation work. Our partnerships span across all our program areas, including fisheries, wildlife, land management, communications and administration. We will continue to work closely with our member groups, as well as non-member groups (e.g., Alberta Fish & Game Association, Pheasants Forever, and Ducks Unlimited Canada) and ESRD.

1.1 Linkages 2009 – 2019 Strategic Business Plan

The *2009 – 2019 Strategic Business Plan* includes both a three-year and ten-year business plan. The objectives identified in the three-year plan are reviewed annually and updated if a significant change in strategic direction is warranted.

The *Strategic Business Plan* is a roadmap that keeps us focused on the strategies that influence our effectiveness. This clear sense of direction enables us to develop the most appropriate means of reaching our goals, which contributes to our success in fulfilling our Mission and achieving our Vision.

Program managers have reviewed the goals and objectives laid out in the *Strategic Business Plan* and have incorporated these into their respective program plans found in this *Annual Operating Plan*.

1.2 Regional Boundary Map

photo: ACA, Mandy CouvedeMurville

2.0

Business Program Areas

2.1 Finance and Administration Programs

Finance and Administration programs focus on ensuring the smooth day-to-day operation of ACA. Tasks performed in these programs include asset management, investment decisions, financial reporting, payroll, payables, receivables and administrative support for our managers and Board of Directors.

Table 1: Finance and Administration Projects for 2014/15

Project		Primary Purpose	Expected Outcomes
Finance		Provide financial services that safeguard company assets. Ensure legal and contractual obligations are met. Provide accurate and timely information to ACA's decision makers.	· Manage assets effectively. · Provide complete and timely legal reporting. · Support management's information needs and facilitate effective decision-making. · Complete all financial functions to maintain and improve all financial processes. · Evaluate and minimize risk of loss or damage to ACA assets.
ACA	$579,813		
Partner	$18,750		
Total	$598,563		
Administration		Provide administrative support to all areas to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of internal operations.	· Support Board of Directors, executive and management. · Maintain building operations.
ACA	$1,596,029		
Partner	$49,500		
Total	$1,645,529		

2.2 Business Development

Business Development is focused on forming new business relationships and strengthening our existing corporate relations with private businesses operating in Alberta and Canada. The goals of our Business Development activities are to increase ACA's profile and raise awareness of conservation in the business community and to engage companies in supporting our conservation work. The majority of these new and existing business relationships are incorporated into the Corporate Partners in Conservation program. In 2014/15, we continue to explore ways to generate non-levy revenue, including advertising sales, sponsorship of specific resource projects (e.g., enhanced fish stocking, wolverine live-trapping), support of our granting programs, corporate involvement in outdoor education and recreation events in communities across Alberta, and terrestrial conservation offsets.

Table 2: Business Development Projects for 2014/15

Project		Primary Purpose	Expected Outcomes
Business Development Support		Strengthen existing partnerships and develop new relationships that support ACA programs and projects.	· Increase non-levy revenue by 5% so that non-levy revenue relative to levy funds accounts for a minimum 35% of total ACA revenue. · Sign on a minimum of five new corporations and/or substantially increase contributions from five existing Corporate Partners in Conservation for conservation-related projects.
ACA	$17,574		
Partner	$255,000		
Total	$272,574		
ACA Store		Provide opportunities for staff to receive ACA-branded clothing for work (office, field, meetings and tradeshows) and personal use.	· Maintain employee satisfaction with merchandise. · Support the overarching ACA goal of increasing brand awareness. · Work with Communications to ensure brand identity is achieved.
ACA	$27,762		
Partner	$0		
Total	$27,762		

2.3 Human Resources Program

Human Resources implements strategies and policies that meet organizational objectives. In 2014/15, our focus is on: 1) developing and implementing programs that foster employee engagement, 2) retention and recruitment and 3) training and development. These three key areas are essential in establishing ACA as a top employer.

Table 3: Human Resources Projects for 2014/15

Project		Primary Purpose	Expected Outcomes
Program Coordination		Maintain market competitiveness and Human Resources innovation.	· Review benefits and compensation to provide the most value to individual employees and new hires. · Create a corporate culture that attracts and retains employees. · Increase job satisfaction to foster a productive work environment with a higher retention rate. · Submit application for the 2015 Alberta's Top 50 Employers competition.
ACA	$158,072		
Partner	$0		
Total	$158,072		
Professional Development		Improve professional knowledge and skill sets as ACA recognizes employees are a long-term capital investment.	· Provide employees with opportunities to grow and take on new challenges through mentoring and training. · Document high level of job satisfaction in the annual staff survey. · Recognize increased levels of job performance during six-month and year-end reviews. · Maintain a work environment that motivates and inspires.
ACA	$25,000		
Partner	$0		
Total	$25,000		

Professional Memberships		Encourage employees to contribute to self-regulating professional associations committed to promoting excellence in professional practices.	· Increase awareness and credibility of ACA and our employees by promoting and maintaining high standards of professional competence and ethics.
ACA	$5,000		
Partner	$0		
Total	$5,000		
Health and Wellness		Ensure ACA has healthy and happy employees.	· Review the health and wellness program, annually. · Examine requests from employees for new wellness activities. · Maintain work-life balance through annual work plans. · Determine employee satisfaction levels through the annual staff survey. · Maintain levels of employee engagement and satisfaction.
ACA	$35,000		
Partner	$0		
Total	$35,000		
Service Awards		Recognize employees for their loyalty, commitment and achievements.	· Provide service awards to employees who reach milestones. · Examine and source innovative service awards on an annual basis.
ACA	$8,000		
Partner	$0		
Total	$8,000		
Online Survey		Determine level of employee satisfaction with various aspects of ACA.	· Conduct annual employee survey. · Identify challenges and develop action plans for improvements. · Review current employee survey and determine whether questions and format should be modified to ensure staff are not complacent.
ACA	$1,000		
Partner	$0		
Total	$1,000		
Recruitment		Use strategies such as social media, the web, ads and relationships with universities to recruit candidates. Create a corporate culture that attracts and retains employees of all generations.	· Promote ACA as an organization where employees can build their careers and expand their skills. · Hire employees with the knowledge, skills and ability to perform the job and whose beliefs and behaviours fit our organizational culture. · Work with universities and colleges to incorporate co-op and intern opportunities.
ACA	$10,000		
Partner	$0		
Total	$10,000		
Career Fairs		Hire high-quality students for temporary summer work. Build employment relationships with students.	· Promote ACA to college and university students. · Provide co-op and intern opportunities to students.
ACA	$9,794		
Partner	$0		
Total	$9,794		

2.4 Health and Safety Program

Our Health and Safety program is an integral part of our operations, ensuring all work is conducted in a healthy and safe manner, regardless of the working environment or situation. Administered by ACA's Health and Safety Committee, the program relies on input from staff and management so that principles and practices remain current, comprehensive, easy to apply, and relevant for day-to-day operations. Maintaining the best possible Health and Safety program requires constant feedback through internal reviews of program materials and an emphasis on incident reporting and tracking.

In 2014/15, our goal is to ensure employees continue to embrace ACA's Health and Safety program and are kept safe and healthy. We will foster a company culture and work environment that ensures safety is a company priority, which includes providing employees with the necessary training, equipment, materials and procedures required to conduct work in a healthy and safe manner. Improvements to the Health and Safety program are continuous so the program remains comprehensive, efficient, effective and current.

In 2014/15, a key goal is maintaining our Certificate of Recognition (COR) from Alberta Employment and Immigration.

Table 4: Health and Safety Projects for 2014/15

Project Name		Primary Purpose	Expected Outcomes
Health and Safety		Foster a company culture and working environment where all employees can work in a safe and healthy manner. Continue to monitor, maintain and improve upon the Health and Safety program so that it remains comprehensive, efficient, effective and current.	· Eliminate workplace injuries as well as loss or damage to property, facilities, materials and equipment. · Integrate workplace safety into daily operations. · Provide ACA employees access to health and safety resources (e.g., forms, policies, procedures and other reference materials). · Provide employees with the necessary training, equipment, materials and procedures required to conduct work in a healthy and safe manner. · Respond to all health and safety incidents, including near misses. · Operate the Health and Safety program in a transparent and open manner. · Finalize revisions to Health and Safety information, manuals and forms based on COR audit reviews, staff suggestions and lessons learned from incidents. · Conduct external audit in 2014 and complete required auditor training to comply with COR requirements. · Maintain COR.
ACA	$191,312		
Partner	$0		
Total	$191,312		

2.5 Information Technology Program

The Information Technology (IT) program is responsible for the day-to-day operation, management and strategic direction of our IT services. The program's primary activities and applications include network and data security, corporate telephone systems, intranet website, financial applications, payroll system, GIS applications and any new applications or services that may arise throughout the year. Core responsibilities also include ensuring workstation and network functionality, providing end-user support, data recovery and data security.

Table 5: Information Technology Projects for 2014/15

Project Name		Primary Purpose	Expected Outcomes
Information Technology/ Systems		Manage and operate ACA's IT infrastructure. Provide technical support to all areas of ACA's IT and management systems. Provide IT initiatives that reduce ACA costs and environmental impacts without limiting future growth. Provide technical support to member groups where ACA provides operational software.	· Improve internal GIS environment to reduce costs. · Support existing infrastructure to provide an efficient and stable environment. · Expand cloud data storage to reduce costs and increase file and photograph capacity. · Work with staff to test new technologies that could be implemented for future growth. · Work with technology partners (Bell, Telus, Microsoft) to reduce yearly costs. · Maintain security of ACA network and data structures. · Resolve in a timely manner any server and network problems. · Provide member groups access to systems and support at a lower cost than they could find without ACA support.
ACA	$338,443		
Partner	$5,000		
Total	$343,443		

photo: ACA, Tyler Johns

3.0

Resource Programs

3.1 Information, Education and Communications Program

Our Information, Education and Communications program is dedicated to developing plans and strategies that generate brand awareness; promote our work and achievements; engage current and new stakeholders; educate the general public, celebrate the partnerships and individuals that support our Mission and Vision; and recognize the contributions of hunters, anglers and trappers whose observations, knowledge and licence levies maximize our ability to conserve Alberta's wild side.

The Information, Education and Communications program is responsible for advertising, internal and external communications, social media, publications, website, media relations, brand awareness, outreach programs, and educational activities. In addition to these responsibilities, we maintain a cost-effective program through partnerships and in-kind support. Advertising helps to offset the costs of producing *Conservation Magazine* and *Discover Alberta's Wild Side: Annual Outdoor Adventure Guide*, and corporate partners cover costs associated with our education and outreach events.

Table 6: Information, Education and Communications Projects for 2014/15

Communications			
Project		**Primary Purpose**	**Expected Outcomes**
General Advertising		Increase brand awareness through communications and advertising efforts.	· Identify key advertising opportunities and implement strategies that align with the *Strategic Business Plan's* three-year objectives. · Conduct extenal survey to determine recognition rates and attitudes of the general public.
ACA	$55,039		
Partner	$0		
Total	$55,039		

Social Media **E-newsletter, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube** ACA $29135 Partner $0 Total $29135	Use social media to connect with our stakeholders and new audiences by highlighting the latest conservation developments, research and events.	· Produce and deliver monthly e-newsletter as a tool to promote important news and events. · Increase *Wild Mail* e-newsletter subscriptions by 20%. · Promote tradeshows we attend, peregrine cams, fish stocking dates, and events such as the Taber Pheasant Festival, Kids Can Catch and Archery Days. · Interact daily with audiences on Facebook and Twitter, and respond to questions. · Increase awareness of conservation issues, such as aquatic invasive species, and member group activities. · Increase Facebook followers by at least 20%. · Provide monthly social media stats to the Management Team. · Assist Wolverine Partnership with the quarterly e-newsletter.
Internal Communication Needs ACA $18,180 Partner $0 Total $18,180	Apply communications best practices to support the President and CEO; Business Development; Human Resources; and Wildlife, Fisheries and Land Management programs. Work with Program Managers and Regional Managers to ensure wildlife, fisheries and land are represented in all publications, on the web and in social media.	· Complete pre-identified and approved program communications needs internally or source through third party. · Complete online seasonal job postings by mid-December 2014. · Post Report Series by the end of April 2015. · Improve program representation in all materials by working closely with Program Managers and Regional Managers. · Develop key communications materials and ensure they are branded appropriately (e.g., media releases, fact sheets, poster templates, presentations). · Design lake aeration and hay ender ads, source costs and coordinate placement for the Fisheries program.

Publications/Print

Project	Primary Purpose	Expected Outcomes
Conservation Magazine **Spring/ Summer** **Fall/ Winter** ACA $56,681 Partner $31,000 Total $87,681	Provides the opportunity to discover and connect with the people and research that positively impact the conservation of Alberta's fish, wildlife and habitat.	· Publish and distribute two issues of *Conservation Magazine* including Wild Tracks - (pull-out) section for youth. · Increase online readership by 20%. · Test 3D digital design software to create a flash magazine pdf for web viewing.
Annual Outdoor Adventure Guide ACA $50,444 Partner $41,500 Total $91,944	Promotes the value of habitat conservation and the benefits of securing that habitat for wildlife.	· Grow relationships with conservation partners who are key contributors to the Guide, such as Alberta Fish & Game Association (AFGA) and its affiliated clubs, Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) and Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC). · Promote the benefits of habitat conservation and how to make land donations. · Produce, publish, promote and facilitate the delivery of 80,000 copies of *Discover Alberta's Wild Side: Annual Outdoor Adventure Guide*.
Annual Operating Plan 2014/15 ACA $9,430 Partner $0 Total $9,430	Ensure our stakeholders are aware of how ACA is spending funds, what projects are being undertaken and how our yearly activities link to our *Strategic Business Plan*.	· Prepare the *Annual Operating Plan* draft for ACA Board of Directors meeting, December 2014. · Coordinate, edit and design the *Annual Operating Plan*. · Complete and post *Annual Operating Plan*, after ACA Board of Directors approval in April 2015 to coincide with the next fiscal year, which starts April 1, 2015.

Annual Report 2013/14 ACA $17,031 Partner $0 Total $17,031	Show stakeholders how ACA has spent funding, what conservation outcomes have been achieved and how ACA has performed relative to our stated goals.	· Produce the *Annual Report* by September 2014. · Report audited financial statements to stakeholders. · Coordinate editing and post 45 resource program annual summaries (Wildlife, Fisheries, Land) online by April 15, 2015. · Test 3D digital design software to create a flash magazine pdf for web viewing.
Grant Fund Annual Report 2013/14 ACA $4,831 Partner $0 Total $4,831	Provide stakeholders information about the ACA Grants Fund projects awarded, allocations, and activities.	· Post and promote, interim reports, annual report, grant information and important deadlines. · Update grant pages with better format and search capabilities. · Produce the *Grant Fund Annual Report* by October 2014 for grant eligible committee meeting in December 2014.
Conservation Site Signs – Design ACA $4,032 Partner $0 Total $4,032	Work with the land and fisheries teams to produce branded Conservation Site Signs and Fisheries Access Site signs. *The budget is allocated within the Land Management and Fisheries programs.*	· Design and coordinate proofing, quotes and printing for approximately 50 signs per year for placement at Conservation Sites.
Other Print Needs ACA $5,900 Partner $0 Total $5,900	Deal with unforeseen printing needs as they arise, as well as more personalized printing needs aimed at donors and conservation partners.	· Print various materials (e.g., Christmas cards, thank you cards for donations).

Guide App

Project	Primary Purpose	Expected Outcomes
Alberta Outdoor Adventure Guide iPhone app ACA $24,173 Partner $0 Total $24,173	Makes planning and finding places (Conservation Sites) to hunt, fish, forage and explore easier with the app.	· Implement two updates to the Alberta Outdoor Adventure Guide iPhone app. · Notify users through the in-app notification about when ponds and lakes are stocked with rainbow trout, the latest events, new berry-picking locations, and conservation concerns, such as invasive aquatic species information. · Increase users by 20%. · Investigate programming costs to design an Android app for the *Discover Alberta's Wild Side: Annual Outdoor Adventure Guide*. · Investigate the possibility of interfacing with GPS.

Website

Project	Primary Purpose	Expected Outcomes
Website Updates ACA $14,310 Partner $0 Total $14,310	Provide an accessible information gateway that engages users and profiles our conservation research, member groups, corporate partners and conservations partners, events and publications.	· Maintain regular monitoring of online information for updates and check links and resources through regular monitoring and updates. · Monitor and track Google analytics and provide monthly update to Management Team. · Implement search engine optimization practices at all times.

Website Maintenance and Development ACA $34,368 Partner $0 Total $34,368	Provide an accessible information gateway that uses current technology to engage users and decrease bounce rates.	· Move all external ACA websites to Linux servers, improving reliability and decreasing server maintenance. · Modify the external websites to use Railo, reducing software costs. · Upgrade Mura to its latest version on all ACA websites and ensure all previous code is compatible with the upgrade. · Adjust all website templates to more efficiently accommodate mobile devices. · Improve online cross-searching between all ACA external websites.

Table 7: Education and Outreach Events: 2014/15

Project	Primary Purpose	Expected Outcomes
Peregrine Cameras **Locations: Bell Tower, UofA, Weber and one other location** ACA $11,328 Partner $3,400 Total $14,728	Provide a bird's-eye view into the daily lives of peregrines as they fight for mates and territory, catch food and raise their young.	· Educate the public about the peregrine and its *Threatened* status in Alberta – knowing is caring. · Increase traffic to our website. · Add two more remote camera locations at known peregrine nesting sites. · Purchase 5 HD cameras and one night-vision camera.
Robert Bateman Conservation Site ACA $5,145 Partner $50,000 Total $55,145	Develop a conservation education site that is linked to the Alberta school curriculum and that promotes the importance of hunting, and trapping in the management of sustainable wildlife populations.	· Develop a trail system on the Robert Bateman Conservation Site. · Develop curriculum linked activities for the site in partnership with Strathcona Wilderness Centre. · Increase interaction between the school community and ACA conservation activities.
2014 Taber Pheasant Festival ACA $127,003 Partner $50,000 Total $177,003	Experienced hunters teach youth proper hunting skills, including ethics and responsible hunting practices. Increase awareness of upland game bird habitat requirements and increase participation in habitat enhancement projects.	· Design materials (e.g., signs, banners, tickets, posters, presentations) for the 4th Annual Taber Pheasant Festival, June through October 2014. · Manage the Taber Pheasant Festival online registration system and questions. · Promote altered municipal and farming practices that support wildlife and self-sustaining pheasant populations. · Continue the tradition of hunting in Alberta. · Provide outdoor enthusiasts the opportunity to experience conservation and a connection to the land. · Provide an opportunity for seasoned hunters to share their love of the outdoors.
Archery Days **Sherwood Park** ACA $1,007 Partner $758 Total $1,765	Provide archery instruction and mentorship lessons that cover basic safety and technique. Foster an interest in outdoor activities related to archery hunting.	· Support and promote Archery Days through our social media outlets. · Continue the tradition of hunting in Alberta.

Alberta Special Hunting Days (September) **Waterfowler Heritage Days** **Provincial Hunting Day** ACA $1000 Partner $0 Total $1000	Allow youth to engage in hunting opportunities. Learn how to hunt, including ethics and responsible hunting practices from experienced hunters.	· Support and promote ESRD hunting days through our social media outlets. · Continue the tradition of hunting in Alberta. · Provide outdoor enthusiasts the opportunity to experience conservation and a connection to the land. · Provide an opportunity for seasoned hunters to share their love of the outdoors by mentoring youth.
Kids Can Catch **Locations: Slave Lake, Fort Saskatchewan, Wabamun, Stettler, Calgary, Lamont, Lacombe** ACA $12,052 Partner $12,281 Total $24,333	Introduce and encourage youth and families to get outdoors and enjoy our angling heritage at stocked lakes and ponds near urban centres. Learn responsible and ethical angling in a safe environment.	· Add five new locations that fall within the Kids Can Catch theme. · Increase awareness and use of stocked and aerated lakes. · Provide sustainable fishing opportunities, while conserving fish populations. · Increase fishing licence sales.
Family Fishing Weekends **February 15 – 17** **July 12 – 13** ACA $2,500 Partner $0 Total $2,500	Introduce and encourage youth and families to get outdoors and enjoy our angling heritage. Learn responsible and ethical angling.	· Support and promote ESRD family fishing weekend through our social media outlets. · Increase fishing licence sales (post event).
Aquatic Invasive Species ACA $2,500 Partner $0 Total $2,500	Assist Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development (ESRD) in preventing the spread of invasive species in Alberta by educating the general public and boat owners specifically about invasive species.	· Aquatic species article printed in *Conservation Magazine*. · Message promoted during the summer via social media. · Increase calls to 1-855-336-2628 (BOAT) about how to prevent the spread of invasive aquatic species.
My Meat's Legal ACA $10,552 Partner $2,840 Total $13,392	Provide Albertans with an opportunity to take a stand against poaching via this anti-poaching movement.	· Increase calls to Report a Poacher (RAP) line · Increase shirt sales, therefore raising money for a new RAP trailer. · Communicate a common message: There is a responsible outdoor recreation community that respects and follows the Alberta Hunting and Fishing Regulations – poachers do not.
WIN card		
Project	**Primary Purpose**	**Expected Outcomes**
WIN Card Reimbursement ACA $5,636 Partner $0 Total $5,636	Encourage recruitment of young people into hunting and allow ACA and our member groups to connect with new hunters at the time they purchase their first WIN card.	· Increase the number of youth 12 to 17 years old who complete the Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association hunter education program. · Retain the number of youth hunters. · Reduce costs for youth who complete the hunter training program by reimbursing their first WIN card. · Introduce and connect young hunters to programs, information and other groups to enhance their experience.

3.2 Wildlife Program

Our Wildlife program not only carries out inventory and habitat enhancement activities, but also at its core seeks to elevate the value of wildlife in the eyes of all Albertans. We recognize the long-term contribution hunters and trappers have made to conservation and see the potential to make these efforts even more important over the next generation. There is also growing interest from the general public to become directly involved with conservation, and we are seeking ways to integrate volunteers in meaningful activities. Our program emphasizes the following themes: big game and furbearer enhancement, upland gamebird enhancement, wetlands and waterfowl, and species at risk.

We continue to work with the Alberta Trappers' Association (ATA) to better understand wolverine distribution and conservation risks. This grassroots effort involves more than two dozen trappers volunteering their time and expertise. We're also collaborating with a University of Albertan (U of A) graduate student project designed to reveal the risks of industrial activity associated with wolverines.

Landowners are vital partners, and many of our enhancement activities focus on private land where we work with farmers and ranchers to enhance wildlife habitat within their successful operations. We'll continue hosting advisory workshops tailored to the farming community in 2014/15, offering insight into working farm practices that can benefit productivity and wildlife.

Most of Alberta's landscapes are in a state of change. Very few areas are exempt from the pressures of expanding industrial activity, recreational pursuits, or residential growth. The Wildlife Habitat Initiative in Low Disturbance Zones (WHILDZ) project identifies high-value resources for wildlife in areas that have relatively low measures of human disturbance. We've identified key mineral licks important for mountain sheep and goats, and we are developing guidelines that would minimize disturbance. We're also preparing to collaborate with grizzly and black bear monitoring through identifying rub objects and estimating numbers based on DNA from hair samples.

Our overall goal for species-at-risk projects is conserving habitat that supports vulnerable species with actions identified in recovery plans. Importantly, these actions positively impact other species as well, such as deer, sharp-tailed grouse or moose, depending on the area. Coordinated efforts to develop recovery plans for species at risk are also a good model for game species. Planning activities include gaining stakeholder buy-in with monitoring built into the long-term recovery model to determine if the process is working. A study to detect amphibians through environmental DNA is underway and shows great promise for improving the efficiency of detecting amphibians in wetlands.

Upland projects include improving hunter access and connectivity along public right-of-ways, assessing gamebird abundance in select areas and implementing enhancements that improve their numbers over the long term. Our habitat actions for waterfowl include providing nesting resources in areas with limited nesting habitat.

Table 8: Wildlife Projects for 2014/15

Big Game and Furbearer Enhancement			
Project		**Primary Purpose**	**Expected Outcomes**
Pronghorn Resource Enhancement and Monitoring			
ACA	$110,479		
Partner	$10,000		
Total	$120,479		

Evaluating fence modifications to improve pronghorn movement and survival	Improve pronghorn movement.	· Evaluate whether enhanced fence areas are used preferentially in comparison with non-modified fences with low bottom wires.
Wildlife-friendly fencing for pronghorn	Enhance pronghorn movement at key locations.	· Provide information to key partner (AFGA) for ranking where fence enhancements need to occur. · Assist AFGA with removal of barbed or page wire and replace with smooth wire at 18 inches above the ground.
Conservation guidelines for pronghorn in North America	Assist with development of North American conservation guidelines for pronghorn.	· Chair the committee writing the North American management guidelines for pronghorn.
Restoring Natural Habitat for Wildlife ACA $77,286 Partner $0 Total $77,286		
Pre-burn planning and post-burn monitoring for restoring wildlife habitat	Evaluate and restore natural disturbance patterns to benefit wildlife – focus on mountain sheep habitat. (northwest, central and southern)	· Compare post-burn response of vegetation with baseline data five years after prescribed burn – 7,000 ha (Central – Nordegg) . · Complete landscape level plan and restoration objectives for priority landscapes focused on mountain sheep.
Habitat restoration for mountain sheep (ACA/ stakeholder volunteers)	Restore priority mountain sheep habitat through stakeholder-based enhancements. (location TBD)	· Identify and rank areas for small-scale mountain sheep habitat enhancements for implementation with stakeholder volunteers.
Forest restoration for upland birds	Restore forest habitat to mimic natural disturbance to benefit upland birds. (northwest and central)	· Identify and assess sharp-tailed and ruffed grouse numbers in relation to cutblock age, stand type, and post-burn treatments. · Scope opportunities for recommended practices to benefit grouse and other wildlife.
Wolverine Distribution and Conservation Risks		
Wolverine occupancy in a changing landscape (ACA/ATA partnership) ACA $258,211 Partner $55,000 Total $313,211	Identify distribution and habitat associated with wolverine occupancy.	· Design and coordinate data collection to determine wolverine occupancy and habitat use with ATA and volunteer trappers. · Present concept of unique partnership across Alberta and to international audiences, extolling the contribution that trappers are making to science-based conservation (province wide – focused in the boreal forest, winter 2014/15).
Effect of industrial disturbance on wolverine and lynx (ACA/U of A partnership) ACA $142,092 Partner $42,000 Total $184,092	Identify if wolverines and lynx are affected by industrial disturbance in collaborative project with U of A.	· Collaborate with U of A and key members of trapping community to better understand the influence of industrial disturbance on wolverines (boreal forest).

Wildlife Habitat in Low Disturbance Zones (WHILDZ) ACA $169,047 Partner $20,000 Total $189,047		
Surveying grizzly and black bear numbers in priority landscapes	Estimate grizzly and black bear numbers using rub object hair samples.	· Identify and map bear rub objects in one bear management area (BMA 5) in collaboration with ESRD, Parks Canada, Alberta Parks and U of A. · Estimate minimum number of grizzly bears and black bears using DNA from hair samples taken from rub objects.
Identify grizzly bear food supply in relation to disturbance history (ACA/U of A partnership)	Identify and map variation in grizzly bear food supply in relation to disturbance history and site characteristics.	· Develop map of changing food supply through spring, summer and fall to highlight key food zones spatially and temporally (BMA 5 and 6 – Crown of Continent). · Test the survival and re-establishment of native fruit-bearing shrubs (bear food supply) within existing disturbed areas.
Identify location and use of mineral licks in low disturbance areas	Identify high-value wildlife mineral licks in wilderness areas (low human disturbance).	· Communicate the use and importance of mineral lick sites with land use planners (forestry, energy, mining, recreation) (southwest Alberta). · Identify, map and communicate important wildlife resources to key land use planning decision makers.
Upland Gamebird Enhancement Program		
Project	**Primary Purpose**	**Expected Outcomes**
Upland Gamebird Enhancement and Habitat Restoration ACA $176,204 Partner $27,500 Total $203,704		
Habitat Legacy Partnership	Enhance upland and riparian habitat for upland birds in collaboration with landowners and Pheasants Forever.	· Complete baseline wildlife and habitat inventories on select properties. · Undertake enhancement activities on select properties. · Monitor habitat enhancements (e.g., shrub survival, vegetation growth rates) and response of indicator species.
Advisory workshops	Enhance stakeholder engagement and practical knowledge through advisory workshops. (northwest and southern)	· Facilitate at least two advisory workshops to convey practical advice for enhancing upland bird habitat or populations. · Deliver two advisory workshops with landowners to convey practical advice to enhance habitat for sharp-tailed grouse.
Upland connectivity for gamebirds	Enhance habitat and improve hunter access along public right-of-ways. (southern)	· Identify and map key corridors important for gamebird movement that occur on unrealized public land. · Enhance gamebird movement along public right-of-ways by enhancing habitat. · Increase hunter access along obscure public right-of-ways.
Upland gamebird raise and release initiative	Engage 4H clubs and volunteers to raise upland gamebirds. (provincial)	· Provide assistance to 4H clubs and other volunteers enabling them to raise and release upland gamebirds in select locations.

Upland bird abundance surveys	Estimate the trend in upland bird numbers in select areas. (northern and southern)	· Survey annual gamebird numbers at select sites and make info available to public. · Identify and engage volunteers to collect these data over expanding area. · Evaluate the response of gamebirds on enhanced sites.
Demonstration farm	Partner with working farm to trial and communicate practices that enhance resources for upland gamebirds (nest, brood and winter habitat, movement corridors, insect forage).	· Enter into long-term (10+ years) working agreement to trial farming practices that enhance habitat and other resources for upland birds and other wildlife. · Initiate baseline inventory on working farm (bird counts, amphibians, invertebrates, habitat, soil).
Pheasant Releases to Enhance Hunting Opportunities ACA $335,384 Partner $30,000 Total $365,384	Enhance hunter opportunity by releasing pheasants in select locations and, in particular, in areas with limited opportunity for native upland birds. (provincial)	· Manage and coordinate pheasant release program within Alberta. · Release 16,000+ pheasants at select sites (n ~ 60). · Engage volunteers to assist with deliveries at sites. · Evaluate the success of program by monitoring hunter participation.
Long-term Approaches to Repopulate Pheasants – Study ACA $10,000 Partner $2,500 Total $12,500	Determine effective approaches for re-establishing pheasant populations in select areas. (southern)	· Initiate three-phase study to determine effective approaches for re-populating pheasants in select areas that will eventually minimize the need for a release program in areas with good habitat (e.g., translocated wild pheasants, hard vs. soft release techniques for pen-reared pheasants).
Sharp-tailed Grouse Stewardship ACA $25,906 Partner $2,000 Total $27,906	Assess and recommend habitat enhancements that benefit sharp-tailed grouse.	· Develop enhancement actions for sharp-tailed grouse on public grazing reserves.

Wetlands and Waterfowl		
Project	**Primary Purpose**	**Expected Outcomes**
Hay-Zama Waterfowl Monitoring ACA $122 Partner $54,210 Total $54,332	Monitor staging waterfowl numbers on Hay-Zama complex to identify periods of high concentrations that lead to temporary suspension of industrial activity.	· Monitor waterfowl numbers on Hay-Zama complex for five weeks in spring and eight weeks in fall. · Notify Energy Resources Conservation Board (ERCB) immediately if threshold waterfowl numbers are reached.
Amphibian Monitoring Using Environmental DNA ACA $33,265 Partner $4,270 Total $37,535		
Amphibian monitoring using environmental DNA	Develop monitoring tool to detect amphibians (10 species) using a DNA-based sampling method.	· Collaborate with genetics lab and MSc student to develop a method for detecting amphibians using genetic information. · Collect field data from select waterbodies.

Volunteer-based monitoring Alberta Volunteer Amphibian Monitoring Program (AVAMP)	Volunteer collection of amphibian location data throughout Alberta.	· Coordinate volunteer collection of amphibian data from across Alberta (AVAMP). · Develop database to record contact and skill information for volunteers who assist on wildlife projects.
Waterfowl Nesting Habitat Enhancement ACA $24,593 Partner $0 Total $24,593	Provide secure nesting locations for duck species where natural cavities (goldeneye, bufflehead) and poor ground cover (mallards) are limited.	· Conduct annual maintenance at existing nest tunnels. · Coordinate the wrap-up of the long-term nest box program. · Increase landowner awareness about the importance of retaining old trees and nesting cover around wetlands.

Species at Risk

Project	Primary Purpose	Expected Outcomes
Alberta Piping Plover Recovery ACA $59,150 Partner $29,060 Total $88,210	Assist recovery of piping plovers through habitat enhancements, and report on success of recovery efforts.	· Implement enhancements, including fencing, sanctuary signage, and vegetation reduction, at select properties. · Conduct inventory of plovers at select lakes. · Submit peer-reviewed paper focused on the success of population recovery using nest exclosures.
Alberta Wildlife Status Reports ACA $32,722 Partner $21,600 Total $54,322	Co-ordinate and develop detailed status reports.	· Initiate new status reports. · Provide data to ESRD for entry in Fisheries and Wildlife Management Information System (FWMIS) or to Alberta Conservation Information Management System (ACIMS) (for plants).
MULTISAR ACA $171,360 Partner $290,525 Total $461,885		
Grassland habitat conservation strategies on working ranches	Engage landowners in stewardship planning to conserve wildlife habitat along the Milk River Basin.	· Initiate habitat conservation strategies at three to four ranches.
Grassland habitat enhancements on working ranchlands	Improve upland and riparian habitat.	· Implement enhancements on partnering ranches.
Grassland monitoring and evaluation on working ranchlands	Evaluate changes in biodiversity on ranches and enhancement sites.	· Inventory and monitor response of indicator species at ranches enrolled in program including (but not limited to) neo-tropical migrants (birds), short-horned lizard, sharp-tailed grouse, and rattlesnake.

3.3 Fisheries Program

Our Fisheries program maintains or improves the diversity and abundance of fish populations, communities, and the biological processes and habitats supporting them. Our program also maintains recreational angling opportunities for future generations by implementing conservation activities that sustain or enhance Alberta's fish populations. Program activities are organized into two areas: 1) Enhanced Sports Fisheries and 2) Monitoring and Evaluations.

Enhanced Sports Fisheries

Enhanced Sports Fisheries includes the Lake Aeration and Enhanced Fish Stocking (EFS) projects, providing Albertans with recreational angling opportunities in areas of the province where fishing opportunities do not otherwise exist. Aerated lakes are typically shallow, eutrophic, experience prolonged ice cover and are prone to both summerkills and winterkills. Aeration maintains habitats and promotes year-round survival of stocked trout. We will aerate 17 lakes during the 2014/15 fiscal year. Through EFS, we stock over 120,000 catchable-sized (i.e., 20 cm) rainbow trout each year into 60 lakes, creating "put-and-take fisheries" that allow anglers to harvest up to five fish per day. Most stocked lakes are close to towns and cities, making them popular family destinations. In addition to providing increased angling opportunities, the EFS and Lake Aeration projects help reduce pressure on limited native stocks, thereby protecting and conserving these species.

Monitoring and Evaluations

This area of work includes projects that involve the inventory and monitoring of priority fish species across the province, providing information on population structure, abundance, distribution and life history strategies. Focal sport fishes in our surveys include walleye, northern pike, Arctic grayling, bull trout, cutthroat trout, rainbow trout, brook trout and sauger. We also monitor sports fisheries for angler use, harvest and associated demographics. Results from these surveys feed directly into ESRD fisheries management plans and form the basis for fishing regulation changes. They also help determine the effectiveness of new management strategies, such as the special walleye fishing licence. Our studies generate critical information required for the development of key provincial conservation initiatives and resource management policies. They include the Alberta Fish Sustainability Index, Alberta Wildlife Status Reports, Alberta Land-use Framework and State of the Watershed reports under the Alberta Water for Life strategy. On the Clearwater River project, we continue integrating advances in analytical techniques, such as occupancy modelling, to lead the development of population status assessment tools for bull trout.

Table 9: Fisheries Projects for 2014/15

Enhanced Sport Fisheries			
Project		**Primary Purpose**	**Expected Outcomes**
Lake Aeration		Create or enhance recreational angling opportunities for Albertans by aerating lakes to promote year-round survival of stocked fish.	• Promote winter survival and prevent summerkill of stocked rainbow trout in 17 waterbodies distributed within ACA regional boundaries as follows: – Northwest Region (six waterbodies): Cecil Thompson Pond and Figure Eight, Swan, Sulphur, East Dollar and Spring lakes. – Central Region (eight waterbodies): Beaver, Mitchell, Millers, Fiesta and Birch lakes, Ironside and Boehlke (currently under evaluation) ponds, and Hansen Reservoir. – Southern Region (one waterbody): Coleman Fish and Game Pond. – Northeast Region (two waterbodies): Muir and Spring lakes.
ACA	$237,768		
Partner	$19,000		
Total	$256,768		

Enhanced Fish Stocking ACA $299,631 Partner $14,100 Total $313,731	Stock rainbow trout into waterbodies to provide Albertans with recreational angling opportunities in areas of the province where such fishing opportunities do not otherwise exist.	· Stock approximately 120,000 (20 cm) trout into 60 waterbodies.
Stocked Trout Survival ACA $225,858 Partner $15,000 Total $240,858	Assess the factors contributing to the survival of stocked trout and angler use of ACA stocked waterbodies.	· Collect trout abundance, physiochemical and angler use data from 12 waterbodies. · Evaluate angling effort, temperature and dissolved oxygen from select waterbodies throughout the summer to assess their use and ability to sustain viable trout fisheries. · Conduct mark-recapture surveys to estimate trout survival.
Fish Stocking Expansion ACA $24,622 Partner $0 Total $24,622	Assess the feasibility of expanding ACA fish-stocking activities.	· Develop a prioritized list of new fish-stocking activities ACA would like to pursue and assess their feasibility. · Develop a comprehensive, prioritized list of specific fish-stocking projects for consideration during the 2015/16 program planning cycle.

Monitoring and Evaluations

Project	Primary Purpose	Expected Outcomes
Swan River Arctic Grayling: A Stock and Watershed Connectivity Survey ACA $46,301 Partner $10,000 Total $56,301	Collect data on distribution, and population demographics of Arctic grayling and on watershed connectivity in the Swan River watershed.	· Determine distribution and population demographics of Arctic grayling in the Swan River system. · Evaluate watershed connectivity and relate to remediation efforts occurring in the watershed. · Enter data in FWMIS.
Developing Efficiencies in Watershed-scale Sampling of Bull Trout Populations ACA $11,447 Partner $0 Total $11,447	Communication of the *Clearwater River Core Area Bull Trout Status Assessment* results, helping develop a provincial standard for bull trout monitoring.	· Communicate study results in a peer-reviewed scientific journal. · Deliver presentation to an international panel of bull trout researchers. · Develop provincial standard for monitoring bull trout status in collaboration with ESRD.
Distribution and Abundance of the Migratory Bull Trout Population in the Castle River Drainage ACA $87,059 Partner $10,000 Total $97,059	Determine the status of the bull trout population in the Castle River drainage. Data collected will also serve as baseline information for measuring the species' response to planned landscape changes in the watershed.	· Determine distribution of bull trout spawning locations throughout the Castle River drainage. · Estimate abundance of adult migratory bull trout in three recognized historical spawning tributaries in the Castle River drainage: Mill Creek, South Castle River and Carbondale River. · Investigate trap avoidance behaviour among bull trout spawning in Mill Creek. · Determine the presence and relative abundance of resident life history forms in the Mill Creek bull trout population. · Deliver project presentations to the Southern Rockies Area Fisheries roundtable meeting. · Enter data in FWMIS.

Waterton River Tailwater Sport Fish Community Assessment ACA $59,665 Partner $0 Total $59,665	Determine distribution and species composition of the sport fish community downstream of the Waterton Reservoir.	· Determine the sport fish community composition in the Waterton River downstream of the reservoir. · Monitor stream temperature conditions in the lower Waterton River to investigate the downstream extent of suitable thermal habitat for trout populations. · Enter data in FWMIS.
Owl River Walleye Spawning Assessment ACA $54,390 Partner $28,895 Total $83,285	Assess use of the Owl River by spawning walleye and spawning habitat condition.	· Estimate abundance of walleye entering the Owl River from Lac La Biche (lake) to spawn. · Monitor known walleye spawning areas, water quality, instream habitat and macro-invertebrates; along a 40 km section of the Owl River.
Effect of Size Selectiveness of Sport Fishery Harvest on Walleye ACA $8,449 Partner $0 Total $8,449	Communication of study results assessing the efficiency of a maximum size-limit regulation in reducing size-selective mortality in walleye populations.	· Communicate study results in a peer-reviewed scientific journal in collaboration with ESRD.
Muskeg River Bull Trout: Status of an Imperiled Population ACA $77,750 Partner $4,963 Total $82,713	Provide information on distribution and population demographics to aid management and recovery efforts of an imperiled bull trout population.	· Estimate abundance of adult bull trout in three reaches of the Muskeg River upstream of Muskeg Falls. · Estimate area of occupancy for juvenile bull trout and non-native brook trout and rainbow trout in the Muskeg River Core Area. · Develop provincial standard for monitoring bull trout status in collaboration with ESRD. · Enter data in FWMIS.
Distribution and Abundance of Sauger and Fish Community Composition in the Milk River ACA $24,918 Partner $8,500 Total $33,418	Determine the distribution and abundance of sauger and fish community composition.	· Estimate the abundance of sauger and fish community composition in three reaches of the Milk River between the North Milk River confluence and Aden bridge. · Enter data in FWMIS.

3.4 Land Management Program

The Land Management program focuses on conserving, protecting and enhancing wildlife and fish habitat. It also promotes the recreational value of conserved land. The major activities for 2014/15 are: 1) Habitat Conservation, 2) Conservation Site Management, 3) Riparian Conservation and 4) Recreational Opportunity Initiatives.

Partnerships are an integral component of the Land Management program. These partnerships require continuous communication with other conservation organizations, member groups, ESRD, corporate partners, our wildlife and fisheries teams, and other stakeholders, including hunters and anglers.

Habitat Conservation

Habitat conservation initiatives secure important wildlife and fish habitat within 27 focus areas in Alberta—for our enjoyment now and for generations to come. We use several methods to secure land including direct purchase, land donations, and habitat lease agreements through the Landowner Habitat Program. Our conservation efforts provide recreational opportunities such as hunting, fishing, photography, hiking, berry picking and wildlife viewing for Albertans and our visitors.

ACA Conservation Site Management

We maintain and manage over 200,000 acres of habitat within Alberta. Fisheries access sites, managed Crown properties, ACA-titled lands, lands with conservation easements, and past stewardship activities—our management activities cover a wide range of lands. We are responsible for restoring and enhancing habitat, controlling invasive species, maintaining and upgrading sites and facilities, addressing industrial referrals, developing management plans for Conservation Sites we own or manage, and installing new signage on all ACA Conservation Sites.

Riparian Conservation

Riparian Conservation involves various management techniques to restore and enhance riparian habitat. We use a variety of tools, including streambank fencing, off-channel watering for livestock, bank stabilization, education and outreach, and habitat retention agreements, to enhance and protect riparian habitat. Riparian initiatives are accomplished in collaboration with private landowners; watershed groups; industry; federal, provincial and municipal governments; and a variety of granting agencies and other stakeholders.

Recreational Opportunity Initiatives

Recreational opportunity initiatives increase and create an awareness of outdoor opportunities for Albertans. It is an outcome of all Land Management projects. The *Discover Alberta's Wild Side: Annual Outdoor Adventure Guide* and the Adventure Guide iPhone app, developed with ACA's Communications program, are important tools that highlight the value of habitat conservation and the diversity of recreational opportunities available to Albertans. The Guide features 748 ACA and partner-owned sites across the province, including those owned by Ducks Unlimited Canada and Alberta Fish and Game Association. Another focus is the *Use Respect – Ask First* program that fosters respect between land users and landowners, increasing responsible access to privately owned lands.

Table 10: Land Management Projects for 2014/15

Habitat Conservation			
Project		**Primary Purpose**	**Expected Outcomes**
Habitat Securement Fund ACA $374,949 Partner $0 Total $374,949		Identify and conserve high-priority wildlife and fish habitat through ACA's Habitat Securement Fund and through collaboration with other conservation partners.	· Secure 1,500 acres of habitat through land purchases and land donations. · Maintain, enhance and expand securement partnerships. · Increase sustainable recreational opportunities across the province. · Provide information to the public that makes it easier for them to enjoy the outdoors, such as the *Annual Outdoor Adventure Guide*, the Adventure Guide app, articles in *Conservation Magazine* and on our external website.
Corporate Partners Program (Securement) ACA $82,145 Partner $0 Total $82,145 Funds for land purchases are allocated in Donated Funds for lands purchases.		Conserve, enhance and restore priority wildlife and fish habitat with corporate partners.	· Secure 1,500 acres of habitat through direct purchase within focus areas. · Restore and enhance habitat on conserved lands (where applicable). · Maintain and enhance current corporate partnerships. · Increase the number of corporate partners actively donating to ACA (one new corporate partner). · Increase sustainable recreational opportunities across the province.
Landowner Habitat Program ACA $81,113 Partner $27,908 Total $109,021		Conserve important habitat on privately owned lands through habitat lease agreements.	· Protect a minimum of 1,000 acres of important wildlife and fish habitat using 5- to 20-year term habitat retention agreements. · Enhance sustainable recreational opportunities on private lands.
Conservation Site Management			
Project		**Primary Purpose**	**Expected Outcomes**
Conservation Site Management ACA $495,189 Partner $119,921 Total $615,110		Manage, enhance and maintain ACA Conservation Sites to provide a diversity of habitat for a variety of fish and wildlife species.	· Manage, enhance and maintain over 200,000 acres of habitat on over 300 Conservation Sites in the province. · Complete inspections on 60% of ACA-managed Conservation Sites. · Install new signage on 20 ACA Conservation Sites. · Enhance wildlife and fish habitat on 31 Conservation Sites. · Maintain and develop collaborative partnerships to enhance management of Conservation Sites. · Enhance sustainable recreational opportunities on ACA-owned and managed sites.
Management Plan Development ACA $76,504 Partner $0 Total $76,504		Develop management plans for Conservation Sites that ACA owns or manages.	· Develop habitat management and enhancement objectives, and identify project partner roles and responsibilities for priority Conservation Sites. · Complete management plans on 100% of titled lands acquired in 2014/15. · Work with partners and update management plans where required.

Fisheries Access Site Management ACA $149,627 Partner $4,835 Total $154,462	Maintain and enhance fisheries access sites that support and increase recreational angling opportunities across the province.	· Manage and maintain 28 fisheries access sites across the province. · Install new ACA signage at two fisheries access sites. · Maintain infrastructure at all fisheries access sites. · Continue providing access for anglers to key streams, rivers, lakes and trout ponds. · Maintain and develop collaborative partnerships to assist with maintenance costs associated with managing fisheries access sites.

Riparian Conservation

Project	Primary Purpose	Expected Outcomes
Riparian Conservation 1) Owl River 2) Beaverlodge River 3) Edson River 4) South Riparian Conservation 5) North Raven and Raven Rivers ACA $122,016 Partner $719,539 Total $841,555	Continue to enhance, restore and protect riparian habitat through collaboration with private landowners, watershed groups, government, industry and other stakeholders.	· Establish 10 to 15 new riparian conservation projects and associated landowner agreements (e.g., fencing, off-channel watering, habitat lease agreements, tree planting, bank stabilization) · Increase public interest and awareness of riparian conservation through community outreach, public presentations and direct contact with key property owners who manage riparian habitat, signage, advertisements, etc. · Complete Cows and Fish health assessments and inventories at new and existing project locations, and conduct water sampling to monitor riparian conditions. · Participate in watershed groups, councils and stewardship networks.

Recreational Opportunity Initiatives

Project	Primary Purpose	Expected Outcomes
Use Respect - Ask First ACA $1000 Partner $0 Total $1000	Increase recreational access opportunities on privately owned lands by promoting the *Use Respect – Ask First* program.	· Distribute signage to increase awareness of *Use Respect* (over 10,000 distributed to date). · Foster respect between land users and landowners. · Deliver program in collaboration with other conservation partners. · Increase awareness and enhance hunting and angling opportunities on privately owned lands across Alberta.
Discover Alberta's Wild Side: Annual Outdoor Adventure Guide Dollars allocated in Information, Education, and Communications	Promote the value of habitat conservation and the diversity of recreational opportunities available on ACA-owned and partner Conservation Sites.	Review and update the Conservation Site database with new ACA Conservation Sites and partner-owned properties for the 8th edition of the Guide (2015/16).

photo: Alberta Justice and Solicitor General

4.0

Report A Poacher Program

As part of the Report A Poacher (RAP) program, we work with Alberta Justice and Solicitor General, Fish & Wildlife Enforcement Branch (AJSG) and ESRD to ensure RAP retains a high profile and remains an important resource for the general public. As such, ACA is responsible for administering program funds and promotional activities. In 2014/15, we will continue to: 1) identify ways to educate the public about poaching in Alberta, 2) refine various promotional aspects of RAP, such as the RAP trailer and promotional items, and 3) improve public awareness of and access to the program.

Table 11: Report A Poacher for 2014/15

Project		Primary Purpose	Expected Outcomes
Report A Poacher		Provide administrative and promotional support. Maintain a high level of awareness and understanding of poaching and the RAP program.	· Use social media to increase program exposure and use. · Complete update of RAP promotional trailer. · Maintain sufficient stock of promotional items used for trade shows and community/stakeholder events, as well as research new items that maximize exposure. · Continue promotion of anti-poaching campaign "My Meat's Legal." · Manage funds used for rewards and for program delivery.
ACA	$245,578		
Partner	$1,351		
Total	$246,929		

5.0

ACA Grants Program

ACA has three separate grants that are available through open competition:

1. **ACA Conservation, Community and Education Grants** (a combination of the former Grant Eligible Conservation Fund Part A and the Hunter, Angler and Trapper Retention, Recruitment and Education Grants. This fund supports conservation activities by individuals, organizations, and communities that contribute to fish and wildlife population health and the health of their environments, and to the understanding, appreciation and use of that those environments. Projects that increase participation in and awareness of outdoor opportunities, while developing knowledge and respect for conservation, are funded through this grant.

2. **ACA Research Grants** (formerly Grant Eligible Conservation Fund Part B) funds high-quality research projects on wildlife, fish and habitat that inform the effective management of wildlife and fish populations or habitat in Alberta. These grants are generally applied for by professional researchers but are available to any individual, organization or community that can provide a high-quality research proposal.

3. **ACA Grants in Biodiversity** provide research funds to outstanding graduate students doing Alberta-based research. The mandate of the program is to train future conservation professionals, while at the same time increasing knowledge of the flora and fauna of Alberta, covering broadly the fields of biodiversity, conservation biology and ecology. This grant is administered in collaboration with the Alberta Co-operative Conservation Research Unit, which represents a consortium of Alberta universities, including University of Alberta, University of Calgary and the University of Lethbridge. This grant is available only to graduate students undertaking research within Alberta (they may be attending universities outside of the province, but their research must be Alberta based).

ACA Chair in Fisheries and Wildlife Grant

The ACA Chair in Fisheries and Wildlife Grant is made available to ensure the ACA Chair in Fisheries and Wildlife is able to provide a link between academic research and ACA and other resource management personnel.

Table 12: Grants Program 2014/15

Project	Primary Purpose	Expected Outcomes
ACA Conservation, Community and Education Grants ACA $970,000 Partner $0 Total $970,000	This fund supports conservation activities by individuals, organizations, and communities that contribute to fish and wildlife population health and the health of their environments, and to the understanding, appreciation and use of that those environments. Projects that increase participation in and awareness of outdoor opportunities, while developing knowledge and respect for conservation, are funded through this grant.	· Contribute to healthy wildlife and fish populations, a healthy environment for wildlife and fish in Alberta, and to the understanding, appreciation and use of that environment. · Accept applications from January 1–31, 2015.
ACA Research Grants ACA $330,000 Partner $0 Total $330,000	This grant funds high quality wildlife, fish and habitat research.	· Contribute to effective management of natural resources in Alberta. · Applications accepted from November 1–29, 2014.
ACA Grants in Biodiversity ACA $0 Partner $225,000 Total $225,000	Support the training of future professional biologists and facilitate graduate student research that focuses on the conservation of Alberta's biological diversity.	· Participate as a member of the Grants Program Committee that awards these funds to select graduate students. · Support high-quality graduate research.
ACA Chair in Fisheries and Wildlife at the U of A ACA $20,500 Partner $0 Total $20,500	Provide educational initiatives to wildlife professionals through the ACA Chair.	· Maintain a close connection between the ACA Chair and ACA programs. · Ensure research knowledge is being transferred to biologists involved in conservation, management and policy development.

6.0

Landowner Compensation and Damage Prevention Programs

The Landowner Compensation and Damage Prevention Programs consist of the Waterfowl Crop Damage Prevention Program, Wildlife Predator Compensation Program and Shot Livestock Compensation Program. ACA is responsible for the administration and implementation of these programs in Alberta.

Waterfowl Crop Damage Prevention

This program assists agricultural producers to help prevent depredation losses to crops caused by waterfowl by providing information on loss prevention techniques and scare cannons. These activities complement the joint federal-provincial financial compensation program, which requires that a prevention program be provided in order for agricultural producers to qualify for compensation funding.

Wildlife Predator Compensation Program

This program provides financial compensation to agricultural producers who have incurred losses to livestock (cattle, swine, sheep, goats and bison) because of predation by wildlife (bears, wolves, cougars or eagles). Assessment of losses is undertaken by Alberta Justice and Solicitor General, Fish & Wildlife Enforcement Branch (AJSG), and ACA is responsible for making the compensation payments to the agricultural producers as per a set payment scheduled. In 2014/15, the federal government will supply approximately 50% of the funding required for compensation payments.

Shot Livestock Compensation Program

This program provides financial compensation to agricultural producers who have incurred losses to livestock because of accidental shooting by third parties during an open hunting season. Compensation covers losses of horses and livestock covered under the predator program, as well as veterinary costs for wounded animals. Assessment of the losses is undertaken by AJSG, and ACA is responsible for making the compensation payments to the agricultural producers as per a set payment schedule.

Table 13: Landowner Compensation and Damage Prevention Projects for 2014/15

Project		Primary Purpose	Expected Outcomes
Waterfowl Crop Damage Prevention		Provide assistance to agricultural producers in preventing crop depredation losses as a result of waterfowl.	· Provide access to scare cannons and information on techniques for reducing crop depredation to agricultural prodcuers. · Ensure the prevention program meets requirements so that Alberta's agricultural producers qualify for the joint federal-provincial compensation program.
ACA	$12,030		
Partner	$31,240		
Total	$43,270		
Wildlife Predator Compensation		Reimburse livestock producers for losses or injury to specified livestock because of predation by wolves, cougars, grizzly bears, black bears or eagles.	· Provide compensation payments up to the annual program budget as approved by the ACA Board of Directors.
ACA	$160,149		
Partner	$150,000		
Total	$310,149		
Shot Livestock Compensation		Reimburse livestock producers for losses or injury to specified livestock as a result of accidental shooting by a third party during an open hunting season.	· Provide compensation payments up to the annual program budget as approved by the ACA Board of Directors.
ACA	$15,000		
Partner	$0		
Total	$15,000		

7.0

Monitoring and Accountability

On time, on budget, high quality and done safely continue to be the cornerstones by which we measure every project.

Project leads are responsible for providing monthly updates, ensuring projects are on track. These updates allow us to address and resolve any issues in a timely manner. In addition, projects leads prepare annual summary reports that are posted on our website by April 30 each year. These summary reports are reviewed as part of an internal quality control process and then are reviewed externally. Posting our reports on the website allows our stakeholders to assess the quality of our work. Whether praise for a job well done or constructive criticism on how to improve our work, we encourage stakeholder feedback.

In addition to our operational controls, we continue to involve our Board of Directors in our monitoring and accountability process, through the Standards Review Committee. This committee selects a group of projects or programs and reviews their merits for scientific credibility, efficiency, and ability to positively impact conservation in Alberta. The Standards Review Committee's recommendations are brought to the Board of Directors and are given to management for immediate implementation, as required.

We assure financial accountability through a number of processes, including internal controls and a yearly external audit. We also make all financial statements available to the public on our website.

Our *Annual Report* is released each September to ESRD, our member groups and to the general public. This document clearly and concisely outlines the projects we have completed, the funds we have spent and the results we have produced. It is this document that our stakeholders should review to ensure that we are providing good conservation value.

Perhaps the most important monitoring and accountability process is our staff, who are always willing to engage with our partners, stakeholders and the general public about our organization, our work and our projects. We pride ourselves on being open and transparent and willing to answer questions about any of our projects.

8.0

Financial Summary

Our 2014/15 operating budget, including projected land donations and funds donated for land purchase, is $17,604,011.

In accordance with the *Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants Standards and Collection Handbook*, our year-end financial statements for land donations and funds donated for land purchase are presented as assets, rather than revenue. Showing these partner donations in our annual budget fairly represents the next 12 months of work and our efforts to increase conservation activities through non-levy funding.

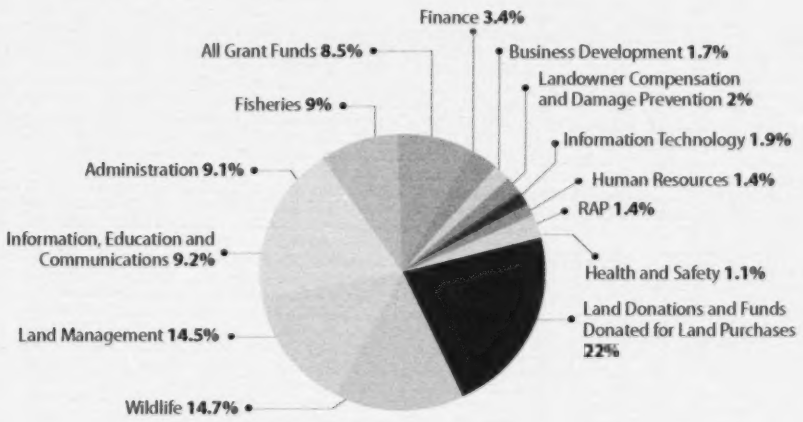
Our 2014/15 budget is based on a levy revenue projection of $11,448,564, established from 2013/14 actuals, a projection of partner (non-levy) revenue for projects of $2,675,946 and a projection of partner (non-levy) donations of land or funds for land purchase of $4 million.

$12,619,488 is allocated to Wildlife, Fisheries, Land Management (including land purchase and donations), and Information, Education and Communications programs. This amount is equivalent to 110% of the levy revenue value collected from hunters and anglers.

Table 14: Summary Budget 2014/15

Program	ACA (Levy Funds)	Partner Funds	Total Budget
Administration	$1,596,030	$49,500	$1,645,530
Finance	$587,939	$20,750	$608,689
Business Development	$45,336	$255,000	$300,336
Human Resources	$254,865	$0	$254,865
Health and Safety	$191,312	$0	$191,312
Information Technology	$338,443	$5,000	$343,443
Information, Education and Communications	$1,460,508	$216,779	$1,677,287
Wildlife	$2,011,821	$638,665	$2,650,486
Fisheries	$1,498,715	$160,458	$1,659,173
Land Management	$1,710,339	$922,203	$2,632,542
Report A Poacher	$245,578	$1,351	$246,929
Landowner Compensation and Damage Prevention	$187,179	$181,240	$368,419
Grants	$1,320,500	$225,000	$1545,500
Subtotal Budget	$11,448,564	$2,675,946	$14,145,010
Land Donations and Funds Donated for Land Purchases	$0	$4,000,000	$4,000,000
TOTAL BUDGET	$11,448,564	$6,675,946	$18,145,010

Figure 1: 2014/15 Budget Breakdown



Alberta Conservation Association

Conserving Alberta's Wild Side

Member Groups

- Alberta Fish & Game Association
- Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association
- Alberta Professional Outfitters Society
- Alberta Trappers' Association
- Nature Alberta
- Pheasants Forever, Alberta Council
- Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta
- Trout Unlimited Canada
- Wild Sheep Foundation Alberta

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